

IN THE CLAIMS

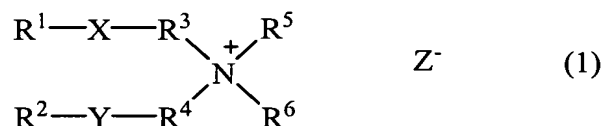
Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (canceled)

Claim 2 (canceled)

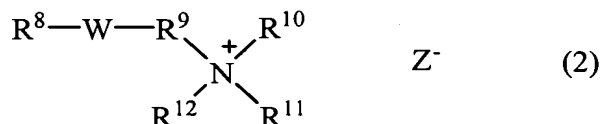
Claim 3 (previously presented): A softener composition comprising:

(a) a quaternary ammonium compound represented by the formula (1):



wherein R^1 and R^2 independently represent a C_{12-22} alkyl or alkenyl group, X and Y are independently ---COO--- , $\text{---CONR}^7\text{---}$, ---OCO--- or $\text{---NR}^7\text{CO---}$, provided that at least one of X and Y is ---COO--- or ---OCO--- , R^7 represents a hydrogen atom or a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group, R^3 and R^4 independently represent a C_{1-5} alkylene group, R^5 and R^6 represent a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group or $\text{R}^1\text{---X---R}^3\text{---}$ and Z^- is an anionic group,

(b) a quaternary ammonium compound represented by the formula (2):



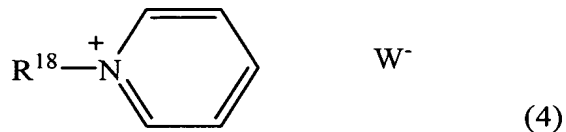
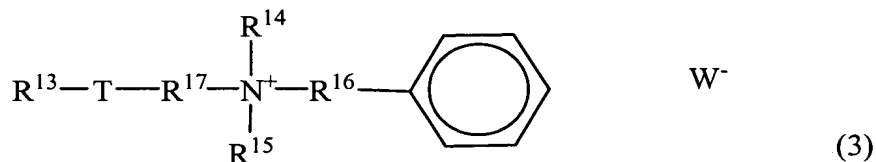
wherein R^8 represents a C_{12-22} alkyl or alkenyl group, W is a group selected from ---COO--- , $\text{---CONR}^7\text{---}$, ---OCO--- and $\text{NR}^7\text{CO---}$, R^7 represents a hydrogen atom or a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group, R^9 represents a C_{1-5} alkylene group, R^{10} and R^{11} represent a C_{1-3} alkyl or

hydroxyalkyl group, R^{12} represents a C_{1-3} alkyl group or $-R^{26}-OH$, R^{26} is a C_{1-5} alkylene group and Z^- is an anionic group, and

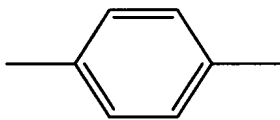
a compound selected from the following component (c) or (d):

(c) 0.1 to 15% by weight of a compound represented by formula (3) and/or formula

(4):

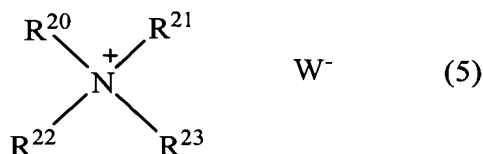


wherein R^{13} and R^{18} independently represent a C_{5-19} alkyl or alkenyl group, R^{14} and R^{15} independently represent a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group, and T is $-COO-$, $-OCO-$, $-CONH-$, $-NHCO-$,



or a linkage, R^{16} represents a C_{1-3} alkylene group, R^{17} represents a C_{1-6} alkylene group or $-(O-R^{19})_n-$, R^{19} is ethylene group or propylene group and n is a number of 1 to 10 and W^- is an anionic group, and

(d) 0.01 to 15% by weight of a compound represented by formula (5):

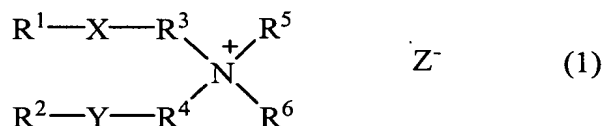


wherein 2 or 3 groups out of R^{20} , R^{21} , R^{22} and R^{23} represent a C_{8-12} alkyl group, the remainder of them represent a C_{1-3} alkyl group, a C_{1-3} hydroxyalkyl group or a C_{7-15} arylalkyl group and Z^- is an anionic group,

which further comprises 0.1 to 5% by weight of (f) a C_{8-22} fatty acid or a salt thereof.

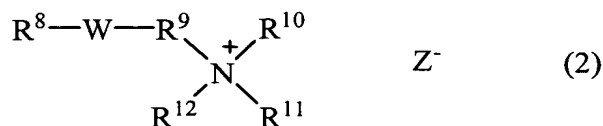
Claim 4 (previously presented): A softener composition comprising:

(a) a quaternary ammonium compound represented by the formula (1):



wherein R^1 and R^2 independently represent a C_{12-22} alkyl or alkenyl group, X and Y are independently $-\text{COO}-$, $-\text{CONR}^7-$, $-\text{OCO}-$ or $-\text{NR}^7\text{CO}-$, provided that at least one of X and Y is $-\text{COO}-$ or $-\text{OCO}-$, R^7 represents a hydrogen atom or a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group, R^3 and R^4 independently represent a C_{1-5} alkylene group, R^5 and R^6 represent a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group or R^1-X-R^3- and Z^- is an anionic group,

(b) a quaternary ammonium compound represented by the formula (2):

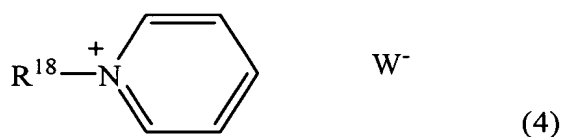
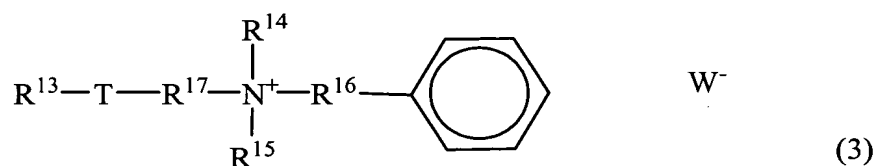


wherein R^8 represents a C_{12-22} alkyl or alkenyl group, W is a group selected from $-\text{COO}-$,

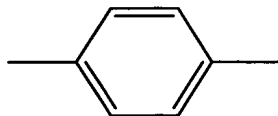
$-\text{CONR}^7-$, $-\text{OCO}-$ and $\text{NR}^7\text{CO}-$, R^7 represents a hydrogen atom or a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group, $-\text{R}^9$ represents a C_{1-5} alkylene group, R^{10} and R^{11} represent a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group, R^{12} represents a C_{1-3} alkyl group or $-\text{R}^{26}-\text{OH}$, R^{26} is a C_{1-5} alkylene group and Z^- is an anionic group, and a compound selected from the following component (c) or (d):

(c) 0.1 to 15% by weight of a compound represented by formula (3) and/or formula

(4):

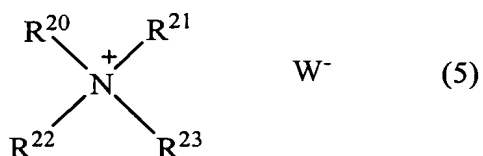


wherein R^{13} and R^{18} independently represent a C_{5-19} alkyl or alkenyl group, R^{14} and R^{15} independently represent a C_{1-3} alkyl or hydroxyalkyl group, and T is $-\text{COO}-$, $-\text{OCO}-$, $-\text{CONH}-$, $-\text{NHCO}-$,



or a linkage, R^{16} represents a C_{1-3} alkylene group, R^{17} represents a C_{1-6} alkylene group or $-(\text{O}-\text{R}^{19})_n-$, R^{19} is ethylene group or propylene group and n is a number of 1 to 10 and W^- is an anionic group, and

(d) 0.01 to 15% by weight of a compound represented by formula (5):



wherein 2 or 3 groups out of R^{20} , R^{21} , R^{22} and R^{23} represent a C_{8-12} alkyl group, the remainder of them represent a C_{1-3} alkyl group, a C_{1-3} hydroxyalkyl group or a C_{7-15} arylalkyl group and Z^- is an anionic group,

which further comprises (e) a nonionic surfactant and 0.1 to 5% by weight of (f) a C_{8-22} fatty acid or salt thereof.

Claim 5 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 4 3, where R^7 is a hydrogen atom.

Claim 6 (cancelled)

Claim 7 (previously presented) The softener composition of claim 3, which further comprises (e) a nonionic surfactant.

Claim 8 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 4 3, which comprises 3-50 % by weight of component (a) 7.

Claim 9 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 4 3, which comprises 0.5 to 10 % by weight of component (b).

Claim 10 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, wherein a weight ratio of component (a)/component (b) is 80/20 to 99/1.

Claim 11 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, comprising component (c) in an amount of 0.1 to 15% by weight;

Claim 12 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, comprising component (c) in a weight ratio of (c)/(a) of 1/30 to 1/1.

Claim 13 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, comprising component (d) in an amount of 0.1 to 15% by weight.

Claim 14 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, comprising component (d) in a weight of (a)/(d) of 50/1 to 2/1.

Claim 15 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, comprising 40 to 90 % by weight of water.

Claim 16 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, having a pH value of 1 to 6.

Claim 17 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 2 3, comprising 0.5 to 10% by weight of said nonionic surfactant.

Claim 18 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, further comprising 0 to 1,000 ppm of an inorganic salt. τ

Claim 19 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 1 3, further comprising a solvent selected from the group consisting of ethanol, isopropanol, glycerin, ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, diethylene glycol, dipropylene glycol, polyoxyethylene phenyl ether and a mixture thereof.

Claim 20 (currently amended) The softener composition of claim 19, wherein said solvent is present in an amount of ~~0~~ up to 20 % by weight.

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENT

No new matter would be added to this application by entry of this amendment. No new issues would be raised before the examiner, as applicants are merely amending the claims to a scope suggested by the examiner. Entry of applicants' amendment and full consideration thereof at this stage of prosecution is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 3-5 and 7-20 will now be active in this application.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

The present invention is directed to a softener composition.

Applicants would like to thank examiner Hardee for indicating that claims 3, 4 and 7 are allowed. Applicants have now canceled claims 1, 2 and 6 without prejudice to their further prosecution in a continuation application. Applicants have also amended the dependency of claims 5 and 7-20 to depend from allowed claim 3.

Applicants submit that this application is now in condition for allowance and early notification of such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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